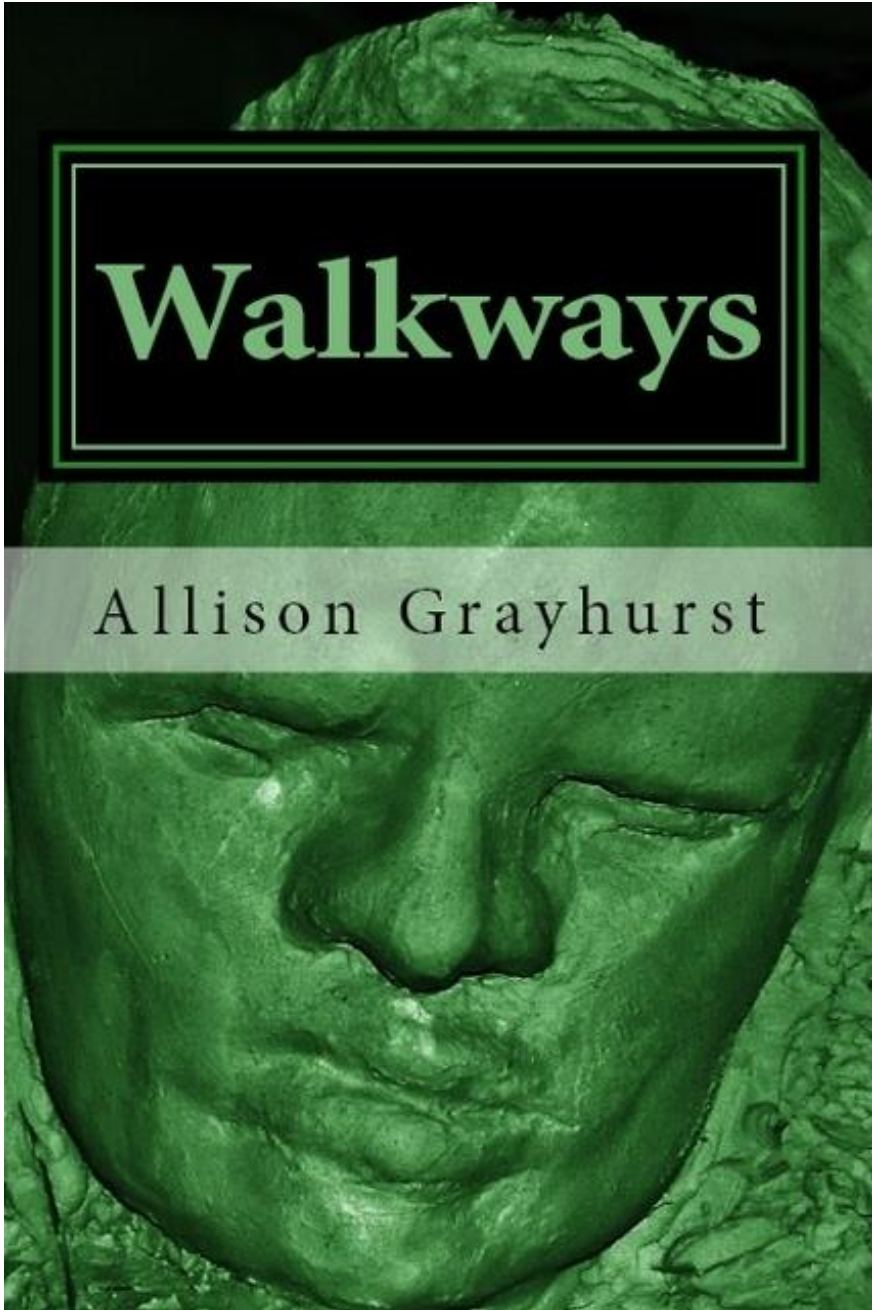




Walkways

Allison Grayhurst

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Edge Unlimited Publishing

Walkways
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Riverstones

Announcing flesh
in the sleepy-loosened
day. A childhood of
bridges, masterpiece aromas
that overlook the playing fields -
one year, two grades and people
once beautiful, now ordinary,
bike turns, riverstones, skipping
on driveways, melting ice over grates

long pleated hair, dark, looking into
competitive eyes. It was the last
year I was there, spending evenings staring
at the gaudy peeling wallpaper or
in the basement crawlspace, space
without any windows, hearing
hockey games, spiders mating, silhouettes
disintegrating. It was the last time
in that car for that car ride, through dull highway hours,
cats in boxes, on laps, children waving, music at half mast,
children waving.

I go into crazy

**I go into crazy
out of the linear stream.**

**Darkness is my umbrella,
keeps me cradled in what I know best.
It is the screen I sit and watch outward on,
see patchworks of colors, images suspended,
high-pitched volume, almost
inaudible.**

**I strain to listen,
and it is a golden pipe to slide up and down on,
railway,
soothing hummm.**

**I go into crazy, a private garden
where I sit with God – a bit like heaven
and a bit like hell**

**no congestion
no in-between**

Kill the Poet

**Kill the poet,
ransack the diet of bliss.
Dust away all traces of inspiration,
childbirth, breath and roses.**

**Thumbtacks, dried-out bones are
what has stayed.
I am a sand-fish, surfing the bottom,
accumulating
duties, commitments, leftover debris
to feed my already grown children.**

**Notions of a mission? A nest of delusions obliterated.
Kill the loose ends, dynamite the cave, come
out in the open and say your piece. My bed is
rippled with loose springs, arranging my nightmares
in grand succession. Kill the poet. You killed
my last cup, spilled my endurance, and I am thinking**

**I will cut my hair cleanly off, clip my eyelashes,
dump all my seeds on stony ground.**

A blind theme of sensual deliverance

**Opaque but controversial
acts of spiritual courage
visceral
cantankerous**

**It is equally important
how something is given
as to how, or if, it is received
discarded
avoided**

**The summer dung is used up.
Flailing or foraging, we all get used up,
turn old and baffled by the complex amount
of disappointment – not just by one
by everyone.**

**Then it is murky
and mortality-unbelievable
that things will change into childhood's ideal.
A choice emerges, to accept without
bitterness, just do the things
that make you happy - child's play.**

**For you - that is all it should have to give.
For others?
A shrug to feign indifference
For others
should not be able to give or take inner satisfaction.
Connection.
Cull the fables**

**Here it is, the butter slab
on the table
pepper spots on the floor
and marmalade
in doses.**

Cupped

Two bodies of water converge, merge
coalesce - incorporation.

Lines of symmetry formed,
synchronicity mastered.

Laws owed only to
controlled experimentation - devoid
of succulent flow, surprise,
tied to the many life-draining
ramifications of technique.

The nodes of mystery cannot be uncovered,
only the outline revealed, after that,
the root mantra gets conveyed.

Like futile attempts at flossing between
two great mountains bonded
by unrest and solid slates -
century-slow-permanent addition.

Circle lifted

It is the same, no different
as a tumble-rumble with God.

Intimacy so perfect it is
deviation – so breath-taking,
it creates breath by
sheer surrender

blind worship.
coming home. the summit
of the highest of angels.

Purified by
the emptying out and also by
actively keeping the beat. Primal
Garden – why can't they see?

Is it potent as touching or potent as a body-
jolt, pacifying into temporary equilibrium?

Is it me, just me
in this place no one can enter
– God & me, together
lacking attainable expression?

If I see

**If I see God's skin,
myself a season of
rain washing a field,
then my condition is final.
Doors keep collapsing
like elm-tree branches in an ice-storm.
Stars are weeds to Oblivion's depths,
sea-floating, swaying with the motion of moons,
spreading weedy flowers of illumination.**

**I moved from my purgatory coffin,
opened my hand to hold yours. Did it matter?
To lift my head to hear your music?
A perpetual low-fuel
drainage, in me, this desire, hole, exposed
and storming, drip, drip, a spider-bite,
a great bird, small in a high height of sky.**

**Still, to be asleep again, before this battered bridge
beckoned me across, before the
culprit of caring cracked my anonymity, my
protective chamber fat with secrets, cold with no need.**

**Looking out, I cry, I could jump, exploring a soft wind.
If only I could stop looking, face
the lonely rushing in, face
the result of this failed equation -
damp dead field, drowned corners.**

Seepage

Weeks arrive to lay bare
the corpse of a wasted dream –
my ideals unfounded, measured with
a spoon. I loved and I've had to kill that love
purposefully, stepping over
into a territory of arctic
severity and separation.

It is natural
for me, a citizenship I owned hanging out in churches,
on church benches, shushed from yawning.
I knew God more in the forest,
quickenning my pace on paths
edging cliffs. Swallows circling as I did
a flawless land.

I knew God best in my bed, talking, never repeating
phrases learned, but earnestly in conversation.
I know God still sometimes
when I am close enough, able to smell our rudimentary union,
brush the locks and flares of your deep and fierce sun
as it rotates within a galaxy riddled rich with stars and asteroids,
when I am in your radar-stream,
pulverized by the intensity of your purity -
porous, cracking, becoming more,
many, smaller and such
unexpected immediacy.
Giving birth. Giving up
my hard-won understanding.

**To fail for you is a victory that
arrives like an ultimatum,
and I am singing – this is new.
It is an embrace,
a personal annihilation to be honored,
swallowed as I am, utterly
into your glow.**

A Gathering of Birds

Bringing back birds,
bare sparrow hearts
tumbling through
spectrums of sensuality
unexplored,
braiding
the straw-strings of hesitation into
a tight rope capable of sustaining
any tension, true
to channeling more
determined incarnations.

Whispers pouring
across pale illusionary divides, dedicated
to slowing the pace, to branding
souls with tender revealing and
deep combustion,
reminding the mind of rare waters -
long stretches of unconscious completion

where heaven
becomes a state of faith
that believes
all joys are possible,
is the gratitude for good things imagined, trust
in what rises, eventually
dissipates or flowers.

Balanced Repertoire

Petals and fizzling small craters, inches
from the side of the road.

I dive
into the net and let
the struggle ensue.
I lived in corners
with the dead-mature, in flaps
like wishy-washy by-standers. But here, entering

the small soft mounds of pleasurable
taboos and smiling up in the treetops, I am sitting
on the weakest branch just to get the best overview.

My tongue
is painted many colours.
I lost you in the nuclear glow. It happened
gradually, like a cliff descending,
finally,
meeting ground.

I used to float -
a silhouette of fine cuts
and obvious edges. But I lost you and
it is good to lose extensions,
flavours of redundant delight.

Enthralled by sensual geometry,
by mountain ridges reflected in heartbeats,
wrinkles, rough spots, perfect
intricacy
equilibrium
subconscious sway, and you.

**You never loved me, never knew
I was a neophyte, taker of whatever
I could get, keeper of
an ethereal garden. I**

**will accept my joy
regardless of lack, discover joy
in what droops to provide me canopy, also
in what arches upward, proclaiming its praise.**

Tell me

**Tell me what
is this aberration, this final cut-glass
apparatus? What are you holding me for,
on this earthquaked-ground with madness filling
my ears, with no relief from the quickening, no shortcut
to liberation? What whim am I? Eventual.
I am eventual, grounded only by my children and the
animals that pace my floors. I will do a visible
decisive deed if that is what you want or I will
suck in the deadening-pretend, barbaric in its stupidity,
disingenuous in its over-rated kindness. What is left?
Tell me, deprive me of government, of natural things
that others have, but tell me what you want me ready
for. Hire me with this particular fruit. Let me be noble,
eliminate my doubt, my fear of being wrong or cruel. Take me
into your music, pound my spirit with your weight and
effort. Tell me what rabid ghost I must put down.
Help me
 put it down.**

Doubt

Afterwards, I sit on the altar
of my withdrawal. I will not kneel, rendering
myself a thicker chair. My kind, like
fangs and hooves combined in one secret
creature. A city without history, emotions that
echo but do not deliver. My dress of skin: this place
cannot hold me any longer. Do you see the thumbprint
of the ocean – crater like – in the center of every Earth-rhythm?
Unable to fully believe in Earthy-things and the sun in its
frame of sky, marching on and over – so tired of this
tangle! ongoing. going on. For hopes of a caress, an instant
of locked eyes and the merging of souls. My voice -
weightless as a dream. Desire is a shell, the scent of
cedarwood saturating the pores, memories I haven't
yet encountered. Sweeping is the goal.
And love stays, but how much
is a basket of exotic fruit, and how much more,
imagination?

Within Reach

Within reach – kaleidoscope breaking.
I know what works, the machine is retreating
and each candle has dripped into oblivion.
God's grace is nestled like nectar on my handkerchief,
it drips when it is squeezed but opens wide
when I take delight in its sunset colour.
The phone call I made 13 years ago has
been returned. Someone I dreamed of is
living without hope. That dream is sailing
on a raft into the unpredictable sea. I will sing
though I fear they will stop me. I will sing
though my face is flushed with doubt's
preoccupying disease.
The joy we've been waiting for is coming.
I see it coming, gradual, like all good things.
I will not be afraid.
I will lift up my heart
and make room for what follows...

You are wrong

**You are wrong as the emptiness
that fills the space after rejection –
monotonous and monotone, a faker in the flesh.
Once taking up a whole continent in mind,
you were the designated bearer of sunlight.
I cared for your wrists, your pulse, the offspring
of your brilliance. I stood beside you, always a little lower,
maybe sterile, never enough. It was that voice that weighed
inside of me holding a gravity of its own, glorifying
even the cold intake of breath after words, your words
that meant more to me than memory, that wore into me like
acid painted on my skin, scorching, welcoming because
they were harsh and indisputable. But now
I exile you from my soul.
Your spring cleaning is death to my desire.
You are wrong and flat and you
don't smell the same. You exist, but only as a chair does
or a house full of boring furniture. You have two
feet, still standing, but I imagine nothing hidden in your eyes –
what I see is beyond my attachment, easy now
to walk away from.**

Mystic

For twelve years
without a word.
Holed up in rented rooms,
head buried in bug-infested beds,
tracing the cracks on the walls.
Nights of circling the executioner, trying to find
some sympathy inside his corroded eyes
but never finding the radiant solidity of sculpture,
only finding intangible corners to hide in, bide your time
in and anxiously explore. You were sobbing,
unmedicated, from country to town, learning new
languages, living off the charity of Queens.
How did you make it, hammered every day
by the troops of torture and captivity? Everyday,
without antidote? I love you here. Does that love count,
to you, dead long before I was born? It must
help, transcending gravity and logic. It must mean
something – I to you as you to me –

my brave my heavy
star.

Walkways



Dual forming on slopes of darker minds.
Succulent nodes of effervescent whispers,
whispering Oh! Blood clots bending
in unison to sharp solstices.

Dig and reap tomorrow's regrets,
piled on like love you thought was comfortable.

Comfort is a guard you let loose,
let down and found judgments -
platters to be served and roasted upon.

Singing for sale. A number left to a key. Fickle
verdicts oscillating between indifference and approval.
Release and acceptance - what else is there?
I am only unhappy when I want what isn't.

Platypus cans of tonic - drink down, flushing

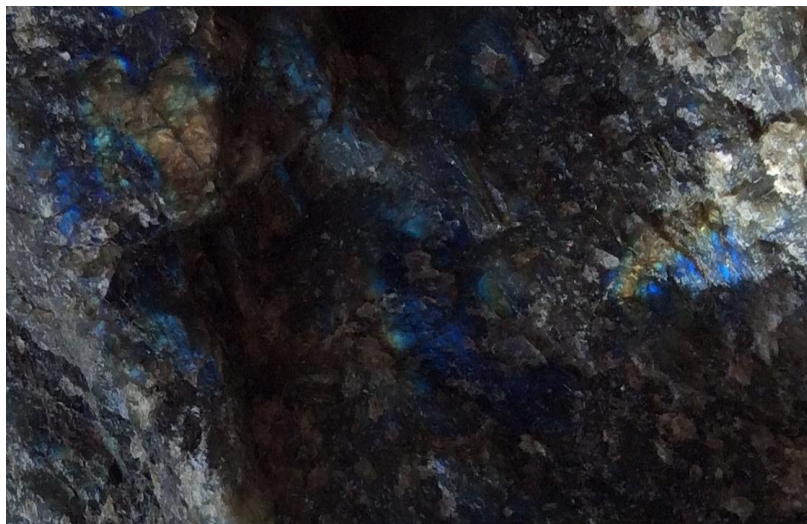
through organs. I see orange. Orange buses,
orange lines of direction on the road, in homes
where anger is held at stillpoint. One point
on a curve. I have lost my feathers,
all means of flight. There is nothing left
but hunger for the skyspace, outerspace, space
where I once travelled through meteor fields,
ballooning over planets' edges like a seamstress,
owning it all before I got grounded, committed
to personal love and the necessity of graves.

Why did I come here? To cry for my loved ones,
hold vigil for the slaughtered pigs?
Centuries that just were, lingering, licking
on waves of vastness, licking dark matter like a candy cane.
Not a soul, but the planets vibrating their orchestra - deep,
varying at intervals, then again, and never changing.
God, what am I doing in the sunlight - on the sidewalks,
making room for children on bicycles?
Putting pressure on my shoulders so I cannot sleep,
cannot appease this malcontent.
Why did I leave - to connect with misplaced animals?
Babies only born? Looking for union when before
I thought myself whole?

Material made from the moon. I understand
the beauty of caves, the great sea turtle's solitary plight...
but more and more - I never wanted more than you
again inside of me - infinity in corporeal form.

God separates to know Itself. God is only what we give,
awakening as we do to warmth and kindness - choices
under the wrap of gravity and yet, somehow,
lifted into altruism.

....



**Smudges, under siege, patches of calcified tissue
and the swamp I enter in - fuming with failed love -
connections broken under the Buddha fire. Detachment
will not save me - nailed to the pavement stone, looking at birds.**

**Summer where have you gone? Smells rise to meet me,
and the air is still humid, pressing on my cortex,
corrupting my ability to choose joy.
Grasshoppers hopping. Will my heart be broken?
Again, again, squeezing, squished
fermenting at the sides, foaming and fizzling, burning sage, but
it is not good enough, not enough to teach me the strokes
or how to steady the raging chaos gestating large
in the pocket of my throat. Continents on fire,
inside organs necessary
to function - why the children? Why not me?**

**Livingroom-light-globe like a crystal ball,
opaque but powerful enough to predict possibilities.
I was never here before, never heard the angry rodents
vocalize, never slept with aching joints, dreams**

of running low and ferns and moss
covering Zen-garden displays.
What else are we going to do here, but procreate, create,
dissipate and die? Van doors left open.
Lawn chairs on the road for pickup.
The windmill, the tilting tops of trees, heavy
with clusters of fresh pinecones.
I am an orange peel, orange, peeled, drying
next to the sewer grate.
I am limp with the weight, the burden of random happenings.
Always I love you and always, I am breathing.
Take me into the arms of your protection.
I don't want another day.
Mass of thick porous grey hovering, no space for hope.
Why the children? Couldn't you spare just them and all
the up-for slaughter animals?
I am done with this place, the tripping curb,
callous indifference - the rippling consequences
of blind destruction.

....



**Piercing, lingering, chiming out a hymn, lullaby on a chain.
Remorse to wade in like a sea-salt bath, absorbing
the past into the present cellular flow.
Mounds of construction sand, building and restoring roots
without life, chopped down at surface level.
Ideologies fuel, then turned to cinder by anger -
justified violence that violates the laws of love.**

**Skittering up stairs, the last time I held a leaf I held
your focused form, unable to stay the distance,
but stayed nonetheless near rudimentary desires.**

**I am cut like a lawn, smooth as carpet. See me now,
skateboarding, jettisoning over humps and bridges.
The wind - position me inside your storm. The last time,
strength enlisted an empty street - such vines
and beautiful stones!**

**Mercy in a crack, a masterpiece of twin creation,
outside art galleries - living wood, sleeping shapes,
inviting holes... holy as sex, sweet hands entwined.**

**Release into me as I release into you,
in mutual receptivity, clear direction, directing energy.
Dew drops evaporating, shining.
Our masthead - brittle, breaking. Even so,
how we are combined! Such glow.
It is glorious to know you like this
and not be afraid.**

....



**Laid low, laid out like soulmates never meant to meet
in this life, in the spectrum of folly and limitation.**

**A painting layered, re-mastered, re-mused and then,
burned by neglect.**

**Miniature moment of perfection, condensed
to hold a legacy in swirling matter, hard and glittering.**

**Fractures as long as a walkway
stretching the borders of a great body of water.**

**Stringing thoughts like a child's dream. I know,
but I've learned not to take synchronicity so seriously,
learned there is only choice, and chance caved into,
selected to stand as fate - the end result, resulting
in a theory of complexities and open systems.**

**Stuck in the ground, protruding stilted like a statue.
Tell me it is true, that nothing pure is subjected to disease.
Crickets in the late morning.
When I am fixated, it is fantasy, false as poison in soup.**

When I am lucid, liquid budding, my fingers are flames,
and all that they contact pulse with their heat.

Various clouds like currents perpetually pumping -
financial lack, and I, myself, curled up on the bottom stair.
Beds I defend, determined to lay in, over and over
hurting for considered crimes. Erasing perimeters, I clutch
at fraudulent mercies, securities of working furnaces
and washed hair. How to love damaged flesh, radiate love
for what is broken, far beyond romanticism, dangerous
as a cockroach and forever mutating -
translucent shells and pores - radioactive
and growing more grotesque under slabs of rotten wood?
Love, I do not understand you as I am older
and keeping up the climb. Medications and
broken down dishwashers.
Debt like ghosts that stick to my aura,
smothering out the colour -
Oh weedy garden! Sparrow on my roof, talk to me for a while.
How can I love, middle-aged, half over, clear
of a younger person's hope and indecision?
Pointing at ecstasy (a snail on my forehead) pointing,
pointing, stung.

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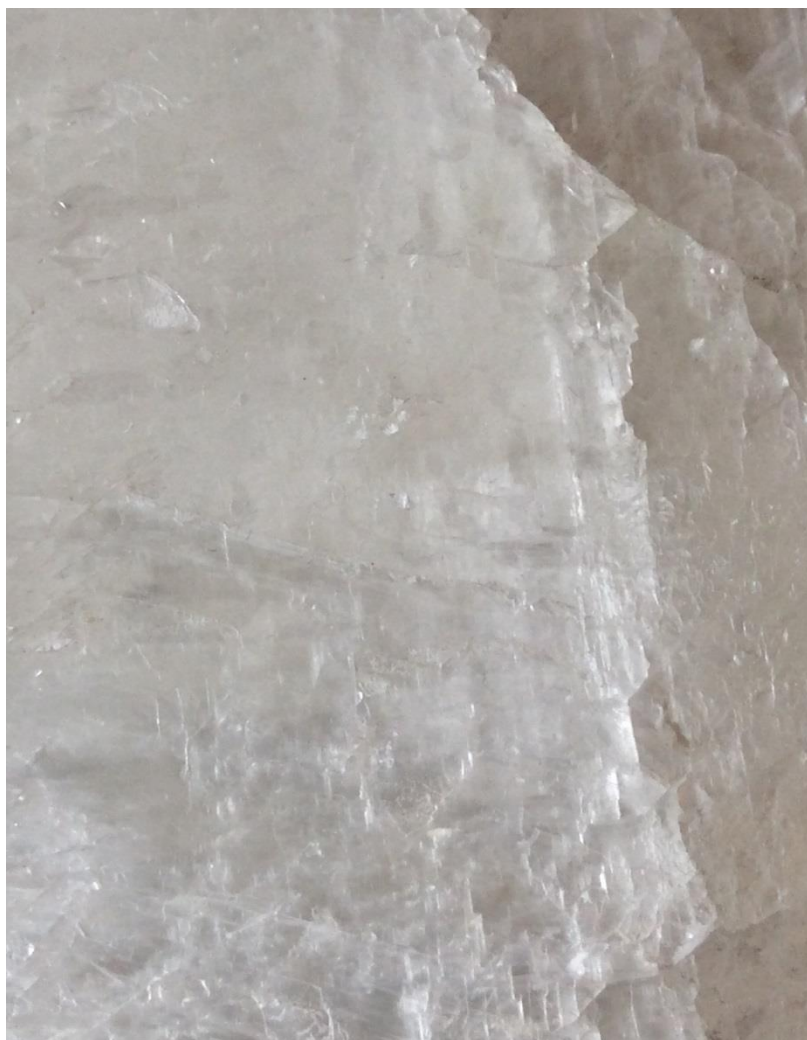
Light that drips down the turnpike, onto roads
and ways far away from any window.
Blocks to build shelters and shields. Flags on flimsy poles.
A neutral breeze busting cardoors and
personalized licence plates.
Paved over, I see a carcass dripping, a little yellow flower,
smaller than a thumbprint.
Rust-coloured shawl, poncho that holds
great sentimental significance holds
me to a memory, old now as a ten-year-old untended garden
or pavement cracks grown into fissures.

Forging, face-like an image. Worm in my sink.
Blood and cup of nutritional joy.
Hold out for the grace of good music
and drying on rocks, nude in the sun.
Quiet heat building up into renewal. Tattered ankle cuffs
and shrinking shadows, mid-stream. Up,
up we go, insistent on making an impression.
But walk lightly is all I'll ever learn, spoon-feeding the children.

**I bloom and I will die a woman, a butcher of frivolity
and the natural sequence of things.**

**The day is one day - enough, taken
into its rolling waters,
a dog's dream to join in, frolic in
some other species' symbolism.**

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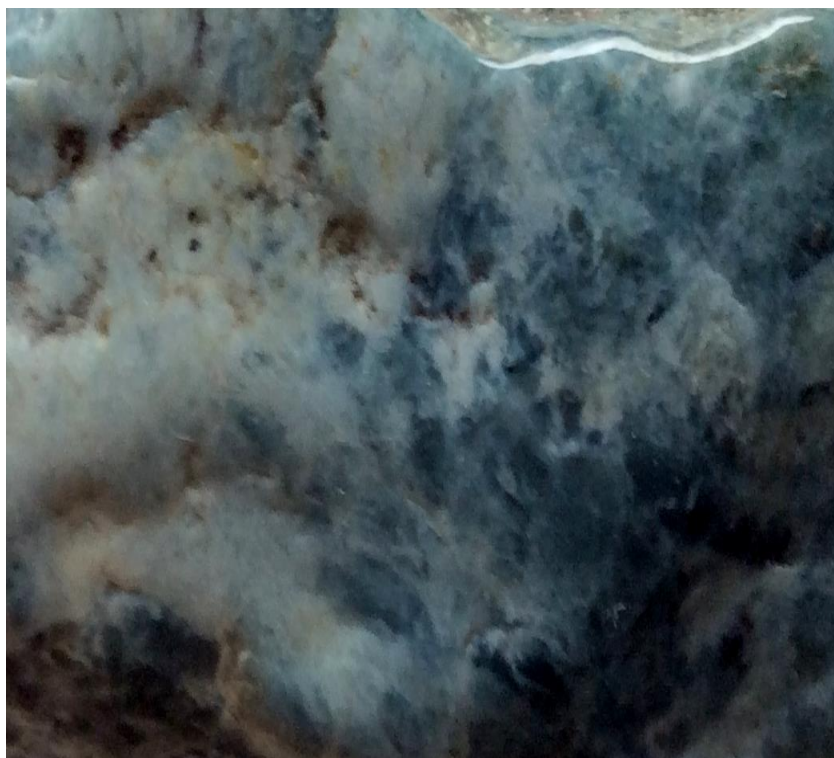


**Come upon me like a feather-stick -
sectioning my abdomen like a fruit. Suddenly
toddlers are conversing and the grey cat
takes in the morning. Bundle of weeds,
bundle of flowers. An opening
under the burning canopy. Lifetimes spent
collecting synergy, male rhythms and fixed lines.**

God is coming down to hide in your loose-change-pocket.
I dreamt of owning your praise. Swinging from the rafters
in a game of hide-and-seek, I sought your breath,
hand of destined chores.

I played along inside the circle, inside a sack
I could hardly breathe out of. Languishing. A round bruise
forming on my left arm. Place me here. Crown me
or stake me on a tall spike. I am sand thrown mid-air.
No place to collect and land, not even a wave, a bucket,
the forelock of a horse. Not even
thinking in a straight continuation, but there, there, a pebble
between paw pads, then, a minor note locked
in perpetual repetition.

....



**Underguard. Crumbled tissue in my mouth.
A crazy way to run - hands in pockets.
Forward without, undeterred by reality.
Plywood I am keeping for emergencies,
for days when putting on the brakes just won't suffice.
Speeding, retreating, torsos twisting beautifully in anticipation.**

**I used to make mortar by hand, no machine to ease
my impossible labor - brick carrying and scaffolding climbing
and voices that ceased for a while in my head, visions
foiled by exhaustion - overused and folding.**

**Injuries are bypassed for much larger connections.
Double-winged, it is all that counts, to be counted**

like lightening, glazed like tile
and ancient bones kept as keep-sakes,
never a participant in trivial bickering or
watered-downed by petty grievances and
conditioned responses.

Sometimes I think of dying.
I think of the unread newspaper that stays folded,
wrapped in an elastic band.
I think of a broken bird making broken bird sounds,
too broken to be saved, treated by most
as a mild inconvenience
to be walked around and grimaced at.
Except by the man with the warm dark eyes, soft
furrowed brow, and a child who will not forget those mangled
wings or the hard lesson of helplessness, the inability to heal
or to be a vessel for a miracle.

It is hard to love me. I am hard, uncompromising
and never still. I am needing intimacy at every turn,
needing space to brood and build my solitary house.
I miss no one I've lost except the dead - a parent,
many animals that once shared my life. I am not easy, not
easygoing - bloodletting, bloodtesting, phone calls
avoided, coiled, almost mad and never understanding.

Sex and perfect reciprocation. Hands that know more
than words, keeping in the margins, layering synergy energy
into peaks and mounds, like mountains and fractal heartbeats,
fearless of falling, or of clouds. You and I,
it has to be our reward for not selling out, not
building cages of adult-overload, for constantly
clearing room for any divine equation no matter
how it threatens our already-precarious security.
We love our children, but not like others love.

We are less of this place, more reliant on grace
than our own worldly ingenuity to keep food
on the table, the bathroom fixed and cleaned.

Dear Jesus,

are you still mine, and I, yours? It is a lot to take in, decades and
mouldy walls. I am afraid of going off track,
of being dead and seeing there is no more I can do. That
it is done and inerasable. I am afraid of not feeling
the warmth of your hand when I walk, because
you are always holding my hand and I love you
with a personal love like Kierkegaard did -
his hunchback, a deformity that kept him pure.
And the loneliness.

Knowing you, but never any other.

I am not that alone, but I remember
space, lightyears of carved-out quiet. It enters me often
and I cannot get out of it. Breathing becomes separation,
a tool I must remind myself to use.

Remind me again, demand
my unwavering loyalty, trust, and all.

....



Paved paths, brisk
storm of senses, an old
opening, endless as a dug-in arrow -
head in the weeping jungle, the coolness
of autumn air brushing tombstones,
the thin necks of geese.
So much night in a single glass, body
and name together, replacing
existence with this inheritance and no other.
Rows of ships crowding the edge of the lake -
docked and bearing down for winter. The distance
grinds, gravel on my belly, cracked shells
in subterranean pages writing down dawns and victories
never experienced, only imagined.
Is it right to receive the bitter strawberry?

**Drink its flesh like juice and
kneel before reality's dictatorship?
Is it clarity? Or forgetting?**

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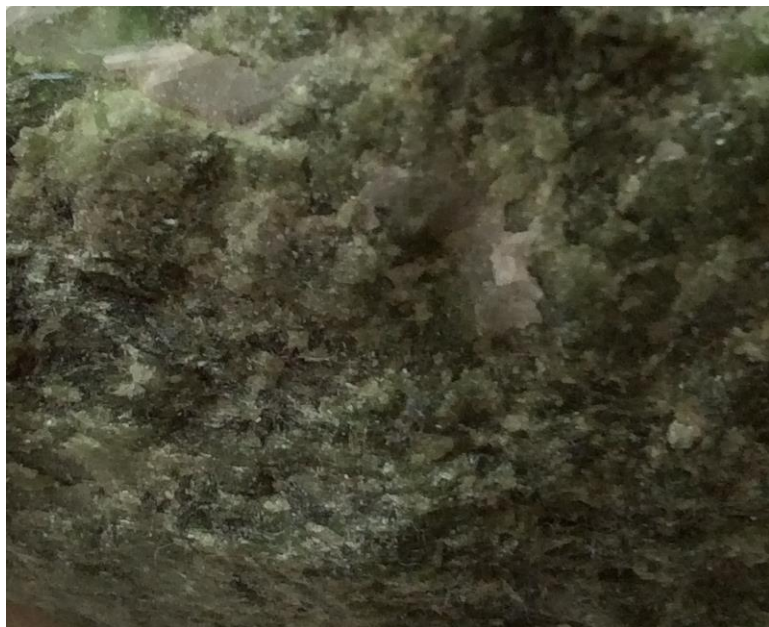


**Escaping on the brook's bank,
banking on nesting warm through
winter, but tears are horns that open
soft spaces, and autumn shifts heat and any hopes
for renewal. Love is fire -
from where it goes there are no shields to block
its scorching. Can we reach bottom in the rain?
Sing hosanna at the mountain's base?**

**Becoming is the stone, the house, the wave.
The lines between us all are solid, no longer lines but
one heavy blanket of vibrancy, creaking, splitting.**

I walk like I walk - barrel beatings,
borrowing crisp notions into my ears.
Stretched for a while to be compact again,
I hear an approaching intrusion, a high
wake, strong enough to travel on.
Stronger days of running through the weeded grass
where rabbits stand still at my passing
and insects move quickly into the shade.
Stranger days of watching a patio stone broken
from a storm - from a fallen tree that fell,
leaving me to find
meaning in such drastic weather.

....



Many years torn - a leaf, a paper towel,
half around the other side, locked
on the beach of my nadir - discipline
and a cold cruel courage, jammed into a groove.
Just the sunlight on my wall,
warming the wall, penetrating the heavy plaster.

I was born from a stem.
I fit on a chalkboard.
Over the cool half-formed moon
I hear an echo, smell the crisp lunar craters -
stagnant rocks, deep troughs to fuel
a million or more Earth dreams.
Scents of dead matter colliding,
of rough stone and endless rotation,
repetitive atmosphere
churning.

**Behind a broken bark I hide my vanity,
rushing into quicksand, there I sink.**

....



Ladle, ladder

**I lay open under the covers, under
cloaks of heartless yesterdays. My mind
is a string that wraps around the outerscope.
I eat wild flowers, never the lamb,
infused with avoidance, spectacular
acrobats of keeping on, caring little for the outcome.**

**Blundering displays of over-dramatizing
self-aggrandizement revealing the wound
of stunted spiritual development
and crippled attempts at affection.
Round and happy, unstructured indulgences
justified by plump purse strings.**

**Falterings. Mistaken formations.
A perfect line in nature existing.**

**All the days I felt alone are behind me,
gathering leaves, misty-eyed overlooking
my home: kaleidoscope windows coming into view.**

....



Once, gentle. Now, riled and nowhere but where
the stench of sewage is piled on the curb.
The gears of bitter disappointment snatching
you into a feral hold. Exotic tall weeds,
broken at the base.
Friendships are spoiled at the root, even love is
overshadowed by the decay.
Less obligation, less affection, less loyalty.
I must pretend we are healed, but the only healing
that happened was a cauterization of our severed bond.
There is anger but less hurt,
just the motions of getting through
undetected, and me by myself,
always alone -

separate happenings, entities, isolated
aspects merging, but never
whole. White car on the road.
Red car on the road. Silver then
blue. The only place absolute is
the place I left where faith was unnecessary
and all cells were one cell, not like here -
different functions - each dominated by its own survival.
No wonder love is weakened, can only achieve
a temporary claim on completion.
I accidentally crush the insect with my heel. It is consumed
by another of its kind, carried off
into the hive of practicality -
a gesture void of remorse or sentimentality.
In the end, there is nothing but wires and fences
and frames of flesh, cartilage and senses. Tomorrow
there will be talk and tea and eyes
locked in intense recognition.
Good for the moment
Good until there comes
the something we want
more of, less of, had enough of....

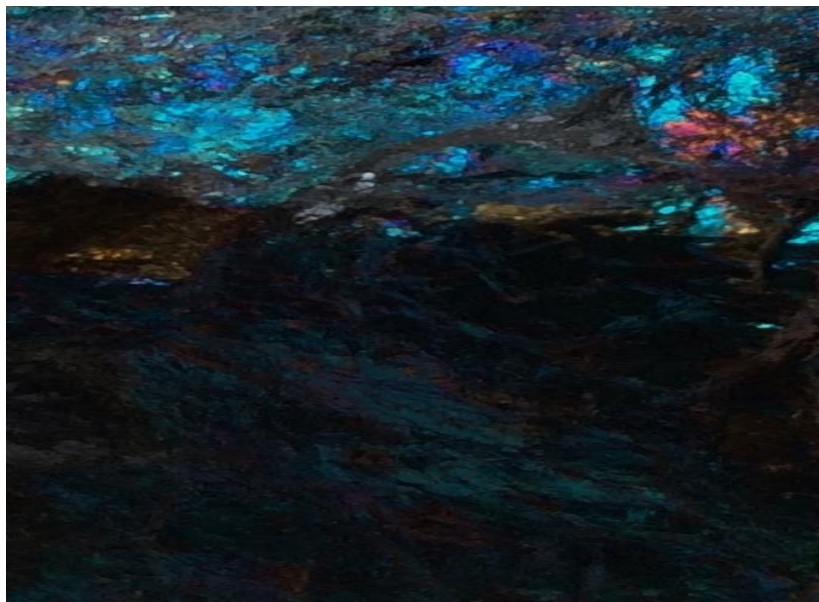
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**For a while -
deathcamps, blue balls
baskin'robbins. Play tomorrow
the lute-song of today and remember
the ground-swell
pounding paradise into my brain, collapsing
from overload, reloading fodder
and flighty friendships I've lost use for.
Nothing counts, count on nothing but playfighting
over the bank, over the brim - rim - keeper
of the fixer-upper, of the still fire, fire still
as yellowed corpses. Mid-fall.
Fake it! Love! kindness, tenderness - be
polite, because very little is
anything you want to take with you.
Care-giver, carer of the children,
the laundry, pets and bank account.**

**It is all you are – rainstorm.
You must take this stone and swallow,
make peace with your burden, make love
with the swarming emptiness, stuck
in a gravitational pull,
planets, solar systems spinning around you
but you are heavy, must be,
unfazed by the pressured wind - stains
on the ground. Inside of you, chopped-up bits of fate
and crimes conceived before you
were born. Fake it, wallpaper it. Go on, try, smile**

....



Fresh, potted
bright as an angel. Death is a whip
I put down. Ill health slumber,
but God is my mercy-king. Queen
of loving miracles. I will sing to
keep the right intention and grieve
minimally for what I cannot do.
Little red tree, no higher than
a toddler-child. Disco ball,
ball blue and gold,
twirl for me, let the grey dissipate into your
twinkling glow and all my blood into your veins,
little tree
plump and flourishing, readying for greater heights,
string-stream through me, weave me into your branches,
still firmly on the ground.

**Angels everywhere I need your temperance. I need
to know my children are protected by your grace,
wing-spread, and even
your cold white eyes.**

....



**Gaze, focus, hold.
Unconscious stream
of raw fluidity streaming,
rising over barriers, drowning them
with the pressure of an open door.**

Cracks of circumstantial disease,
creating pockmarks to expand destiny's choices,
fashioning gifts to give,
earned by bomb-droppings
and low flying plane-explosions.
Cobweb parties, graffiti
on the skin of your back,
made with a blade as small and smooth
as the tip of a hawk's feather.
Weaning off the burnt oak,
preening patches of grime.
Wake and rhyme, garden-keeper,
ambush your fear - it cannot be real!
Lungs run the same vibration as a flame.
It is hard, but not impossible. Gulp the sea
of senseless over-warming, pool the salt-taste
in your mouth, feel it
around your lip-rim, the sides of your cheeks. And there,
be safe, joining with the translucent swimmers, floaters
of prehistoric heritage.

....



**Principles of duty
overtaking sleep like a wave.
Heavy love rooted in isolation,
reflecting the depths of true giving.
A condition turns to disease, restrictions
bare down. What is ordinary becomes like
a cage. Children in the drifting storm, drifting
on condensed-traffic streets, how I love you.
How I would do everything I cannot do to ease
the grip of your elephant shackles. Mine was the angel's
autonomy, where nothing was miscellaneous and my bed
was a rich blackness that absorbed all time. Mine was loud**

without noise or distraction, just the buoyant sparkle flow
of paired-off stars and the countless debris of ongoing creation.
Mine is yours now, inside less-than-working-organs, kidneys
like puzzle pieces, seamed together by an amateur.
Where are you now, God-who-remembers, reminds me
of what I once was? My God and Jesus of the lilies,
why the children? Why this fluke,
this bizarre nightmare crawling, closer,
closer than when I had no body, no loves to look after?
And oh I am tired, worn as an old shoe that must keep
the broken glass at bay. Where are you my God, my Jesus?
I know you are here. I know something, but not enough
to deflate my bloating anxiety. It is grief all over again and I
hide myself in older hands, friendless,
unsupported, remembering
the wholeness in every flaw, in the universe's veined light
I once travelled on. Remembering that what is flawed sparkles
with a unique variation of beauty, rainbow fractions, infractions
that are blessings that seep and saturate sinews
and bones, galaxies
perpetual, renewable
where everything sings useful -
seemingly incongruent, yet in truth, masterfully
precise.

....



In and out of Spain

Spanish gardens, donkey trails.

**Up steep dusty mountains we went, the four of us,
then we walked along rocky ocean cliffs, poking long sticks
in the waves. Whether it was an octopus' play or anger,
tentacles wrapped tight around the tree-limb,
my brother screamed with excitement, pulled for a while
then let go.**

**Under surveillance at the corner store, we were
government-spied on
while buying popsicle rockets, licking,
lazily skipping back to the pool. I snuck
behind our apartment building
to feed dinner scraps to the desolate feline strays.**

**My mother bought us dyed pink chicks at Easter,
chick-feet running across a tile hard floor.
My father brought them back to the market
to face their inevitable doom.**

**Baby teeth, my brother's and mine, tied to a string
tied to an open door.**

**Grandmother with her long
boney brown fingers, her fearful sins and Lucifer
always behind our backs, up elevators,
fueling the first of my many nightmares, and also
my morality.**

**A white Volkswagen. A massive pinkish sun,
making friends with Spanish boys breaking
bread beside Flamenco dancers.**

There was a shark in the water.
I was lifted onto my father's shoulders,
as he ran fast, past the menacing fin to the shore.

A diving board, lessons in breathing
and earning a swimmer's endurance,
lessons in lifting my double-jointed arm to gain
front-crawl perfection.

Mother's blonde and blonder hair.
Everynight parties.

Holland shoes
instead of stockings at Christmas.
Learning math at the kitchen table.
My father's arms carrying me home
after a late night gathering of strange comic-book creatures,
laughing, making us little ones sit at the smaller table, ignoring
our just-out-of-toddlerhood need for adult attention.

Kindergarten handwriting at Bambi School,
Rice pudding everyday for lunch. *Naranja-head*,
children pointing, making fun because of my orange hair.
A pencil jabbed into my upper arm -
40 years later, the lead is still visible.

When we drove across the Denia boarder, into France,
then landed for months in London,
I could see my father's memories coming back, his
disappointments
overtaking. Maybe it was because it was in London
where his own father died, left India for, only to die
two weeks later in his wife's arms,
leaving five children behind.

**The first year back in Montreal,
my father started drinking heavily while my mother gave up,
got involved with her celebrity journalism and multitude of
friends.**

**I remember going to get breakfast, my father passed out
on the kitchen floor. I remember
in and out of Spain.**

Past obligation

Perched and listening,
a point of war.
Several days I lived in a hole,
shoulder shot by the blast
of a rubber hammer coming down.
Clear as pacing, counting
the clock ties, permits overdue,
you stayed like a waning moon, unobtrusive
in a cloud-cloaked sky -
the only light left to have. Somewhere in
that shady disaster I bought a dream,
almost new, with you, carefully walking
the wet rocks. I fell asleep and you stayed, documenting
my close-to-death dawn. Fishing me out of the fishtank,
releasing me into wide open waters.
Middle age is best, sea-worn but still pursuing.
You stayed – an island never claimed by reptiles,
a freight train, moving slow enough to chase and board.
Thank you for staying, for your fervent destiny
choke-collar-chain and your eyes
of tender extremes. I lay it down.
The lizard with the leaf.
The primal mysticism I built my struggle on.
I lay beside you, knowing you climbed many stairs
to find me, and you stayed.

I moved like a moon

**in predictable orbit, smashed
by meteors, space pebbles
meeting my surface with deep impact, when
there were dark oceans under my skin, unseen
single forms, coupled forms, and beds of
colourless weeds, but I steadied myself
on the cold shell of repetitive expectations -
dead valleys here, dead heights there.**

**Going through the hard crust, under, into
a thicker atmosphere, currents of heaviness,
breaking barriers better off broken.
Haunted by shapes that come close and rarely touch,
in this weighted environment, by-passing predator
tentacles and jaws by instinct alone, no journey-map,
stars or horizon to act as goal or inspiration, but**

**rolling
through cross-waves with creatures captured
by a dark density like
myself, shaded, loose at the extremities, compact
at the core, thriving on plateaus of deep pressure,
salty flavours all around - so far gone from walking
that legs leave, replaced by fins, and language is not
sound, but a full-body resonance - no delay
between appetite and attainment.**

A weighted bliss in the lonely light

**Love is a mountain inside a stone,
a lightweight singer finding purpose in a mourning choir.
Love is broken, mutating into falsetto, breaking,
then layering a new underbelly. Love is something
to wish for – moving, movable with just the right
amount of softness and substance, just the tips of fingers
coursing over a body. Love is a mind free enough to know
compassion as a coping method. It is a body unbearable alone,
but under love's touch, able to mark off
conclusion after conclusion -**

**constantly budding, lasting ease
lasting elation.**

Evolution for some, not for all

**Piercing malleable opening,
a softness in the face
over ridden by cynical neglect.
Supper is almost ready, folly on
the garden steps.
Intonations speak the
underbelly layers of languages.
Puddles I deliberately
step in to know the intimacy of water,
the revival of being overpowered by the strongest
of all Earth's elements.
Superimpose me on your raincloud.
I cry like Lazarus shedding his week-old shroud.
I stumble under the falcon's swooping breath,
remembering myself prehistoric -
a bird before birds.**

Creativity

Peeled of my own death,
entering a corridor of dawn,
heat without fire,
a staircase into the void,
buried in the gas furnace, this
guest that never comes, eats bread
or slips into the cradle of a comfortable
home. Pen and beauty, an inevitable
loneliness that victory cannot solve,
a transitory opera, bird songs, fragile,
almost breaking, vibrating at a desperate
but soft speed.

A woodland to walk through that inherits
a shadow canopy darkness. Walk through
regardless of doubts full-blown,
regardless of scrapes across your tender surface.
Love is just an image
as you walk,
sounds are menacing but
never reach crescendo,
never sustain the heavier beat that leads
to ecstasy's blackout.

Leaves become teeth.
Impressions are unkind.
Your husk is broken
and your blood is a heap of
dead violets crushed
in a celebrated summer.

Master-piece

Patterns of
perfect chaos,
intricately separate and
growing, inside the fulcrum
of my personal biology.
Defined only by my relation
to another, weighted down to this rock,
this glorious giver of gravity and greenery.

Dreams of galaxies, streams of potent
heat, maneuvering glows,
brilliant pallets, housing
celestial communities.
Limited to a repetitive rhythm that alters
incrementally, evolves, slow, unperceptively, inside
of that,
I expand, fingers not
like the dead-hand of a yogi master, lifted
permanently drained, shriveled by an irrational
devotion to suffering, but like a startled
infant's fingers, outstretched
mid-air in a move of instant instinct I touch
lightwaves,
merge with their flow,
twists and swirls,
cosmos canyons, rivers, dunes -
a sweet remembering of womb-like love,
a thumbprint kiss from lips I have always
always known.

Matchstick, acorn hill

Some altered landscapes go unnoticed,
hidden by mature growth,
lush angular anomalies,
and streets continue on
as though limping was not a hindrance
only an eccentricity - limping slow
as our sun's heat is slow to reach the exoplanets
or slow as destined love can be before it is
fully embraced.

Self-definitions needing
to be re-defined and illusions
of future bliss needing
to be released for more authentic possibilities.
Years of pebble-hopping, fresh denials
embodied into lifestyles.
The spot is marked. Grass stained,
unwashable, obvious to everyone,

but you are on the rafters, singing
to a made-up ghost, you are whistling
the tune you learned as a child,
whistling without variation,
plodding the automatic path
you were told would lead to joy,
to a mandatory means of fulfillment,

instead of seeing and serving the deformity,
blessing its merging waters with your own,
becoming stronger still, blooming as it grows,
methodically eliminating your most coveted
expectations.

Currents

The extremities
are beautiful as stained glass, green
as watered grass
and smells that take me over
a river, salted currents,
blooming with the long-bodied
seal, near curved mountain tops,
fresh mist, malleable fog. Humpback
dive. Cold summer winds,
oceans moving in, moving
the Blue whale, the Belugas,
the dark-fined Minkes.

On land, visualizing the underground rooted networks
that create lush densities of forests,
mountain geography, complex geometry

where fungi are conductors of communication
and legacies are passed down,
in spite of fires, droughts,
insect infestations. Places

enchancing children's minds
with tales of fear and heroic
overcoming. Places
to wade in, walk through, hide in
and be exposed.

Huddled in unity,
a river pod in winding ebbs, a family
in sync, mastering the undertows.

Paired

Hole in the sky we go
through. Other way
around, we exit on the peak.
Oblong mercy is the natural order
of things. We see an innate
camera reciting images
made up of everyone's fluid flames,
discovering everyone's life is short.

I remember sleeping in a dark summer,
remember the innards of the cave I strode into,
making a home out of its
damp walls and dirt.
I never meant to leave that home, never thought
I could find one to hold awareness with such intensity, savoring
the brink-edge depths, even
expanding the boundaries. Never thought to be coupled,
completed in an evolving perfection, never thought
I could find one to give me permission to embody my desires,
discover my desires before I do, then honor the reciprocation
of mutual satisfied longing.

Our bodies become spiritual.
Ourselves, undivided
from the fixed-point and from the no-point
chaos blues. Our gift
is a box of fresh fruit, full
whenever opened - mixed
succulent, surprising pleasures.
Ours is a wholeness that

can be experienced without complications
because we know that death makes God
necessary, and because
we are braver, only capable
when we are where we stood
before our births, each pore
mingled, sensitized, our organs submerged
in the consciousness of this re-joining,
speaking in tongues, with tongues and touch.
The time of only light awakened, then
the time before light
entered, restored.

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in: Calliope; Gutter Eloquence; Chicago Record Magazine; The Kitchen Poet; Long Story Short; Collective Exile; The Bitchin' Kitsch; The Muse-An International Journal of Poetry June 2014; VIMFIREmagazine; The Continuist; Coe Review; hello goodbye goodbye hello anthology; Ikleftiko; Blue Heron Review; Fragrance Poetry Magazine; Quail Bell Magazine; The Magnolia Review; Scars Publications; Stepping Stones Magazine; Tiny Moments, anthology, Pringmill Media Corp.; ArtVilla; The Intersection anthology; VerseWrights; Creative Talents Unleashed; Kind of a Hurricane Press; Indiana Voice Journal; blackmail press; Sunlight in the Sanctuary anthology; Think Pink, Pink.Girl.Ink Press; Lunar Lit Poetry Page; Viral Cat; Section 8 Magazine; Bond Street Review; Nothing. No One. Nowhere.; Down in the Dirt anthology

Reviews of the poetry in 'Walkways':

"We've recently received the work of Toronto poet Allison Grayhurst, a collection of vivid imagery and gripping enjambment that puts the reader in a spiralling world of despair. By using language to express the human conflicts of inner turmoil and the way in which our past burdens interact with the subconscious, the self and the world around us, Grayhurst sculpts poems that are revealing and confessional, as well as technically adept in their formatting and diction," *David Eatock, The Continuist.*

In response to the 16-part poem - Walkways:

"This is brilliant! Brilliant. Reminds me of when I first read Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass". And I wanted to stand up on the city bus and exclaim aloud: "Listen to this!" A comprehensive capturing of human earthly experience in all its dimensions without missing a beat – beyond the conscious mind – dancing with the levels of our knowing and sensing – that we feel but do not always recognize, and rarely, oh so rarely articulate. Clearly, Grayhurst's poetic journey has taken her to the mountain top," *Taylor Jane Green, registered holistic talk therapist and author.*

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupine Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.

**Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay;
www.allisongrayhurst.com**

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“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness*, singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of *Wigford Rememberies*, *Nightwood Editons*; www.kypharness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity’s authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” *Taylor Jane Green*, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology* and *The Rise of Eros*.

“Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst,” *Blaise Wigglesworth, Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice.*

“Grayhurst’s poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original,” *Beach Holme Publishers.*

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.*

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt, poet and author.*

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis, poet, novelist and educator.*

“When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold,” *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,” *Cristina Deptula*, editor of Synchronized Chaos.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry." Eric M. Vogt, poet and author.

"What a treasure Allison Grayhurst is. Her gift? To unfold for us life at this intensity of feeling and revelation. Who knew truth and beauty could be so intertwined and so passionate?" Taylor Jane Green, Registered Holistic Talk Therapist and author.

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Walkways - the poetry of Allison Grayhurst



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